

Vancouver Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

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Vancouver's Duke of Connaught's Own Rifles

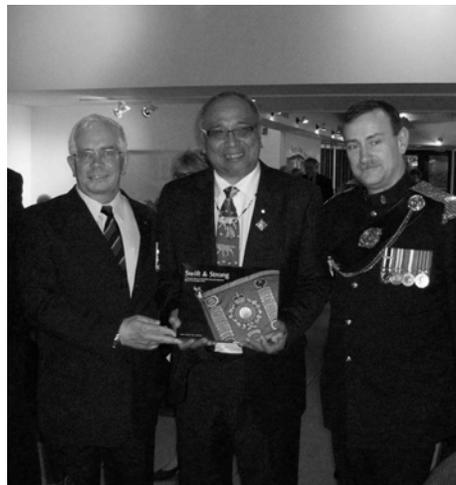
January Speaker: Colonel (retired) Keith Maxwell, OMM, ED

While Vancouver itself has never seen anything involving direct military conflict within the city, the military in various forms has always been part of the city's narrative maintaining peace and order. What began in Victoria in 1883 as the British Columbia Provisional Regiment of Garrison Artillery in 1900, evolved into the 6th Regiment, Duke of Connaught's Own Rifles with headquarters in Vancouver. (The popular Duke, Queen Victoria's seventh child, had a mutual affection for Canada where he served as Governor General from 1911-1916.) Designated the British Columbia Regiment (Duke of Connaught's Own) (DCO) in 1920, it still basically retains the same name and is universally known as the "Dukes."

The DCO over the years has moved with the times. Used to put down Steveston's fisherman's strike in 1900, it found a permanent home in the new Beatty Street Drill Hall in 1901 with Larwill Park as its parade ground. It provided members to the South African Constabulary and in 1903, an inspiration to new recruit J. S. Mathews, Vancouver's future Archivist. In 1909 the DCO sent its bugle and brass band to Seattle's Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition and between 1912 and 1914 it was busy quelling race disturbances and strikes

in Vancouver and Nanaimo. In July 1914 they were part of a show of military force that brought an end to the *Komagata Maru* incident.

Serving admirably in WWI and bringing home 912 awards for gallantry, they carried on through the inter-war years with pride of accomplishment. The DCO was mobilized again in 1939 and in 1942 it was deployed overseas where they became part of the Allied offensive



Keith Maxwell (left) and Dwayne Snow (right), co-authors of *Swift & Strong*, with Lieutenant-Governor Steven Point. *Photo submitted.*

in Europe. After the war, the British Columbia Regiment became involved in everything from civil duties to

peacekeeping overseas. The British Columbia Regiment (Duke of Connaught's Own) is now richly textured into Vancouver's narrative and the memories of its people.

Colonel (retired) Keith Maxwell, OMM, ED, began his military career in 1968 serving two years with the British Columbia Regiment (DC) before leaving the Regiment as a Corporal two years later. He then moved up through the Canadian Forces serving as a Fighter/Air Weapons Controller in NORAD, Air Command and NATO and finished his military career in 1998 as the Chief of Air Command and Control at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe in Mons, Belgium. He spent more than half his career outside Canada. Upon formal retirement from the Canadian Forces he served for eleven years on the NATO Staff in Brussels. Colonel Maxwell along with Dwayne Snow, Ron Leblanc, and Kelly Deschênes, wrote *Swift & Strong: A Pictorial History of the British Columbia Regiment (Duke of Connaught's Own)*, a recent B.C. Lieutenant Governor's Awards winner for historical writing.

He currently teaches at Capilano University on the Sunshine Coast.

Bruce M. Watson

Next Meeting: 7:30 PM, Thursday, January 24, 2013 at Museum of Vancouver

President's Notes

This issue of the newsletter concludes our three-part series about life at the Manhattan Apartments in the 1940s and 1950s by Richard Toporoski. I hope you've enjoyed reading about Richard's childhood memories as much as I have! (And thank you, Richard, for so generously sharing the stories of your childhood with us.)

It's funny how the 1940s and 1950s don't really seem very long ago – but 1940 and 1950 were 73 and 63 years ago respectively! By any measure, that's history!

I'd love to hear other members' memories of growing up in Vancouver, or even just life in Vancouver. We will happily edit and publish your stories as long as they are original.

Tell us about your neighbourhood. Your house or apartment. Your travels on streetcars and interurbans or early highways. Your days at nightclubs or shows. Buying your first car in Vancouver. The biggest snowstorm in Vancouver. A special memory at the PNE. Perhaps you were at a show hosted by Red Robinson – like at Kerrisdale Arena with Bill Haley & The Comets. There are tons of ideas. What do you have in your scrapbooks, photo albums, or keepsakes? I invite you to enjoy a trip down memory lane and share your reminiscences with us!

Again, even events we think are only a short time ago are now many decades old. The Beatles at Empire Stadium in 1964... 48 years ago. Or Elvis... 56 years ago. The last interurban between Marpole and Steveston was in 1958... 54 years ago. The last streetcar ran on Hastings in April 1955... over 57 years ago. All of these things are now history!

If you're not sure what you want to say or don't feel comfortable with your writing ability, please feel free to send an email (or letter) to talk it over. If you can tell us your story in an email, we can probably help piece it together no matter your writing skill!

And I'm sure I'm not the only one that would love to read your story!

Scott Anderson, President
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Growing Up in The Manhattan

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yard on the side, inhabited, my friends told me, although I never saw either of them, by an elderly lady and her deaf dog. There were more shops and then a red house with a much smaller yard in front and a path through to a parking lot, garages, and the lane behind, and then a congeries of small shops, including a two-storey building with four apartments up on the second floor, the two apartments in the back having huge porticoes - but only overlooking that parking lot! But the most interesting (to me) shop in this building was an austere Chinese laundry, where customers handed in and received their laundry back through a small aperture inside the shop. The otherwise barren wooden wall containing this aperture, however, was adorned only with a framed and glazed 1901 calendar (to a little kid around 1950, 1901 seemed like ancient history) bearing a photograph of Queen Victoria with, around the edges, portraits of military gentlemen (I presume people like Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener), entitled "Soldiers of the Queen". This artefact was obviously no longer of any use as a calendar, so it must have been a prized possession of the proprietor. It certainly intrigued me.

Reaching the age of five and six meant going to kindergarten and then to school, where after being originally taken, I was soon able to go on my own. This meant, of course, venturing south from Robson and Burrard to what we called Dawson Annex School. This building stood on the site of the present Market Place I.G.A. and Vancouver Tower on Burrard at Barclay Street, and had succeeded the original West School. The building, though called Dawson Annex (the big Sir William Dawson School (as I determined always to call it once I started going there) was up the Burrard Street Hill in a 1913 building built to replace the original 1892 building, which then became King George High School) displayed, carved in stone over the grand stairs leading up to the great main entrance, the legend "ABERDEEN SCHOOL". The school had obviously originally been named after the Earl of Aberdeen, Governor General of Canada from 1893 to 1898, but I don't recall the significance of the name ever being explained to us. Something else that I don't recall being explained to me was why I was strapped two times in grade two. All I remember of those occasions was being taken with a group of fellow miscreants to the basement by the head teacher (only later did we learn that women in those days were not allowed the title of "Principal", but Dawson Annex was, in addition, not the main school anyhow), who for some reason, laid a gauzy scarf over her arm as she applied the paddle to our outstretched palms.

My other recollections of the school are the mock kitchen and living and dining rooms in the kindergarten building, where I was fascinated to play miniature house with my fellow students and remember being told by the teacher to keep my voice down. The following autumn, of 1947, I next remember being taught, on having my name called in grade one, to say, "Present, Miss Armour", although I had no idea at first what "present" meant. And I also remember, along

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Growing Up in The Manhattan

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with the wooden pens into which we fitted steel nibs, which we dipped into the inkwells in our desks (no, I never put any girl's pigtail into the well) and cleaned with pen wipers, the comment which Mrs. Howie, my grade two teacher (whose name I used to mispronounce as "Howbie" and had to be corrected several times) wrote in my report card, "Richard thinks fast and his pen runs away with him, as does his tongue at times." I was now ready for the big Dawson School up that hill.

— Peek into the Past —



Photo: City of Vancouver Archives AM358-S1-2:CVA 152-6.04

In January 1931 — 82 years ago — the Canadian Pacific Railway began construction of what would be called the Dunsmuir Tunnel. The tunnel, largely in the shape of an elongated "S," would connect the CPR passenger station tracks on the shores of Burrard Inlet to their yards on False Creek. The tunnel would replace a route that crossed four major downtown streets, many of which a train could block at the same time. Costing \$1.6 million, the tunnel went into service in 1933. Empty CPR passenger trains used the tunnel before and after their runs as they moved between the Cordova Street station and the Drake Street coach servicing yards. Short freight trains travelling between the port and the yards also used it. When the yards closed in the early 1980s, the tunnel would soon begin a second life after an extensive rebuilding. Since 1986, the tunnel has been used by SkyTrain as it travels under downtown to Waterfront Station, the renamed former CPR station.

Jim McGraw

Welcome New VHS Member

Rebecca Ann Dolen

Upcoming Speakers

The VHS invites everyone (including non-members) to attend our monthly talks. The talks are free and are held at the Museum of Vancouver, 1100 Chestnut Street (close to Vanier Park) at 7:30pm on the fourth Thursday of every month except June, July, August, December).

Thursday, Feb. 28, 2013

At the World's Edge — Curt Lang's Vancouver 1937-1998

Speaker: Claudia Cornwall

Poet, artist, photographer, boat builder, fisherman, entrepreneur, software developer would all describe the multi-talented Curt Lang. Writer Claudia Cornwall introduces us to this fascinating Vancouverite and his many works.

Thursday, March 28, 2013

Alvo von Alvensleben: Vancouver's Flamboyant Entrepreneur

Speaker: Eve Lazarus

Alvo von Alvensleben, son of a highly placed German count, entrepreneur, and Vancouver booster of great flamboyance arrived in the city in 1904 with four dollars in his pocket. He became one of Vancouver's legendary and wealthiest characters. Rumours of him being a German spy forced Alvensleben to move to Seattle where he could not duplicate his Vancouver successes.

Thursday, April 25, 2013

Our Friend Joe: The Joe Fortes Story

Speaker: Lisa Ann Smith

When a young West Indian sailor named Seraphim "Joe" Fortes arrived in Vancouver in 1885 aboard the Robert Kerr with little to his name, no one could have possibly suspected that one hundred years later he would be voted "Citizen of the Century." When Joe Fortes died in 1922, his funeral was the largest the city had seen and was attended by everyone from the city's elite to the most common soul. Learn more about this fascinating man whose name now adorns a City of Vancouver library branch as well as a renowned restaurant.

Growing Up in the Manhattan Apartments in the 1940s and 1950s (Part 3 of 3)

By Richard Toporoski

VHS member Richard Toporoski grew up in the iconic Manhattan apartment building at the corner of Robson and Thurlow in the 1940s and 1950s. He wrote down his memories in an essay, which we are pleased to present. Join him and his playmates and relive life on Robson as it was 50 to 70 years ago. Due to its length, Richard's article is being published in several installments. The first was in the October 2012 newsletter, while the second was in the November 2012 issue.

– Jim McGraw, Newsletter Editor



The Manhattan Apartments sometime in the 1910s

Photo: City of Vancouver Archives AM54-S4-1- Richard Broadbridge, photographer

On Robson Street itself there was, as I mentioned, the life of the busy city, though without the crowds and traffic of today and certainly with no fashionable shops and little ethnic presence other than the Busy Bee, the Chinese-run convenience store, built at the north end of a big barn-like house on the southwest corner of Thurlow and Robson, kitty-corner from the Manhattan, and other Chinese greengrocers on the other side of Robson on the way to Burrard Street. Burrard Street itself was the farthest east I ventured on my own along the sidewalk on some friend's borrowed tricycle, although I would also make a circumnavigation of the block and come back by Alberni Street, then hardly more than a back lane (with the back doors of the Palomar Supper Club and

the sophisticated Ritz Apartment Hotel), compared to the fashionable and crowded shopping and dining block it is today. The particular feature I remember at Burrard and Robson Streets was the single red-green (that is, no amber) traffic signal hanging in the centre of the intersection, which rang whenever it was about to change direction. Back at the Manhattan, on the west side of Thurlow, where there was, of course, no traffic light, there was on the north corner a take-away fish and chips restaurant, and farther west on the south side of Robson, past a few storefronts, the Safeway store, the supermarket of the day, where my mother took me when she went grocery shopping. She sometimes mentioned that things were expensive, something I didn't understand because I often saw shopkeepers giving her money, not realising that she was just getting back her change! I had my own lesson in the expense of food and general inflation, when the price of a loaf of bread at Golf's Bakery, immediately across Robson Street from the Manhattan, where we bought our baked goods, rose from ten cents to eleven!

Back on our north side of Robson, the Manhattan had a branch of Cunningham's Drug Store on the main floor right at the corner of Thurlow, which many years later moved across the street to be replaced by a travel agency (there's a Starbucks there now). Farther east, past the Robson Street side door into the building (which I remember always providing a cool refuge in the heat of a Vancouver summer) was a beauty parlour and then a barber shop in the join between the main building and its 1912 annex. Many years later, when Robson Street turned into Robsonstrasse, the easternmost shop in the building, in the annex, was occupied by Freybe's, a continental delicatessen. Farther along there was a collection of a few more shops and then a big house with a big

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